

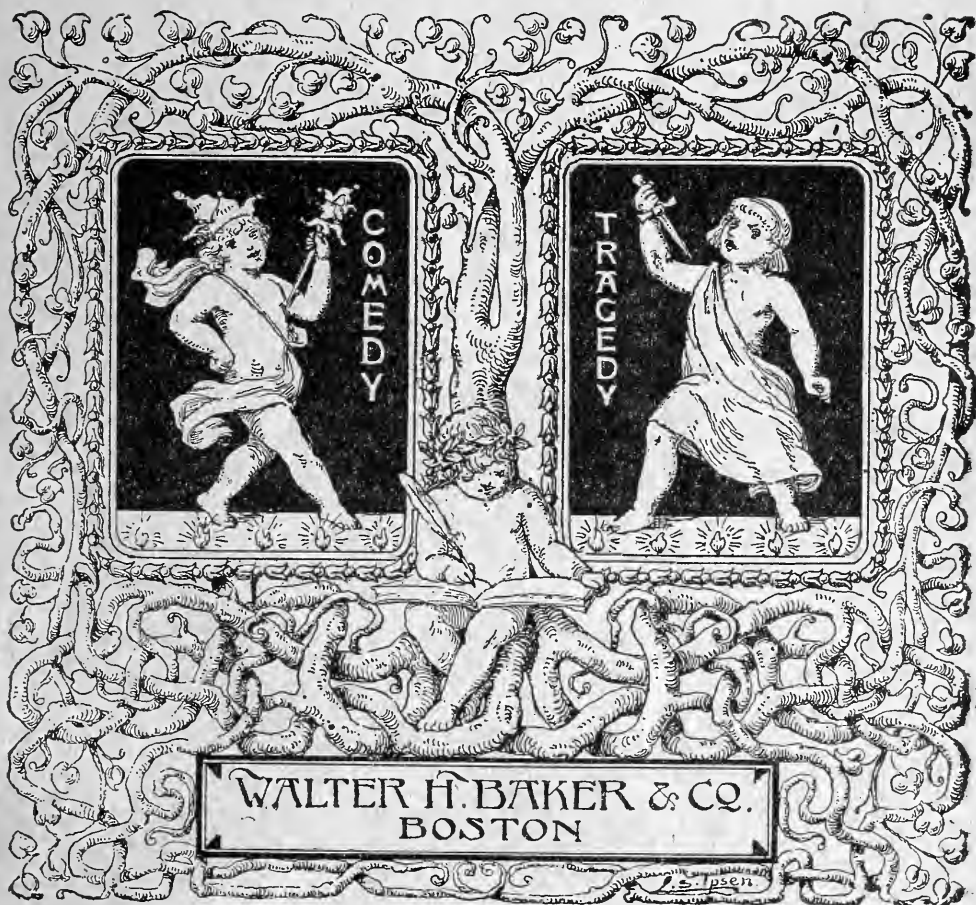
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The King Pin

A Comedy in Three Acts

By
CARL L. OSWALD

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BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.

1913

The King Pin

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CHARACTERS

TOM WARD, *editor of the "Daily Post."*

CYRUS CAMERON, *president of the Central National Bank.*

JIM FREDERICKS, *reporter for the "Post."*

JOSEPH CAMERON, *son of Cyrus.*

DICK THOMPSON, *a friend.*

FRED HARWOOD, *a politician.*

JOHN CONNORS, *a politician.*

THOMAS, *the butler.*

RUTH CAMERON, *daughter of Cyrus.*

BETTY WARD, *Tom's sister.*

MABEL CAROTHERS, } *friends of Betty and Ruth.*

EDITH SCHUYLER, }

TIME.—First week in September, any year.

SYNOPSIS

ACT I.—Library in the home of Cyrus Cameron. Afternoon.

ACT II.—Office of *The Daily Post*. The next morning.

ACT III. Room in the home of Cyrus Cameron. The same evening.



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The King Pin

ACT I

SCENE.—*Room in home of MR. CYRUS CAMERON. Time, the first week in September, any year. Afternoon. Scene is set to represent a room opening into a fairly wide hallway, rear left. Down stage is a large library table. Davenport rear left, and numerous other chairs are placed about. Door, left front. Fireplace, right.*

(As curtain rises, THOMAS has hand on knob of door and has door slightly ajar. He is speaking to some one inside.)

THOMAS. Yes, sir, thank you, sir. I'll see that you are not disturbed.

(Closes door softly and walks to rear center, where he stands facing front, very solemn and stately. Noise off rear right, whistling or singing, by JOSEPH CAMERON, after which he enters rear center and comes down right, slapping THOMAS on the back as he passes him. JOE is in tennis costume. THOMAS wilts somewhat under the blow, but recovers his poise and stands impassive.)

JOE. Hello, Fossil-face,—busy?

THOMAS. No—er—yes, sir, thank you, sir.

JOE. You look it. *(Pauses.)* Say, Thomas, do you like your job?

THOMAS. Yes, sir, thank you, sir.

JOE. Like it very much, eh?

THOMAS. Yes, sir, thank you, sir.

(JOE walks left disgustedly. THOMAS looks anxious. JOE turns quickly.)

JOE. Thomas, I think you're dippy.

THOMAS. Yes, sir, thank—er—was there anything else, sir?

JOE. No. (THOMAS starts to exit, rear left.) Er—yes. Where's Dad?

(A murmur of voices from behind left front door. JOE puts hand to ear listening, then drops it and turns to THOMAS.)

THOMAS (nervously indicating door left front). Er—in—ah—in his room, asleep, sir. He said that he was not to be disturbed. (Regains his poise.)

JOE. Dad? Asleep at this time of day? Come again.

THOMAS. Yes, sir. There was—er—a directors' meeting here last evening and it tired your father very much, so after lunch to-day he decided to take a nap. Is that all, sir?

JOE. Yes, that's about all for you. You've lied about enough for one day. (A murmur is again heard from behind door, left front.) Listen to that, he's talking in his sleep. He needs a doctor, and you—you need a better education in the fine art of lying.

THOMAS. Yes, sir, thank you, sir.

(Turns and walks stiffly off, rear left.)

JOE (looking at door of father's room and continuing). I wonder who's in there with Dad? Some politician undoubtedly. I wish Dad would cut out the dirty politics and give the papers a chance to roast some one else.

Enter JIM FREDERICKS, rear right.

JIM. Hello, Joe.

JOE. Hello, Jim.

JIM. I looked all over town for you this morning. I wanted you to go fishing.

JOE. Fishing? No chance around here,—the fish-markets are too busy keeping the anglers' club supplied.

JIM. Well—what's the objection to fishing and selling the results to the fish-markets?

JOE. Too uncertain,—especially when one has his weather eye on the matrimonial market.

JIM. Said one being me?

JOE. Exactly.

JIM. But who said I have my eye on—er—the matrimonial market?

JOE. Nobody said so. The fact is very evident.

JIM. Gee! And I thought I had my goggles on.

JOE. Well, I don't blame you; Miss Carothers is a peach,

JIM (*sarcastically*). Say, you've got an awful nerve,—butting in on my affairs like that.

JOE (*aggrieved*). Butting in! Why, if you don't know that you're in love with Mabel Carothers, you're the only one in town who don't, that's all.

JIM (*startled*). Does Mabel know?

JOE. Well, if she don't she ought to. The bunch was kidding her about it this morning and she became quite peeved.

JIM. I don't blame her. You people ought to have your heads knocked together for starting a mess like this. By the way, where were you this morning?

JOE. Out for a spin in Tom's new motor boat.

JIM. Did Tom take you?

JOE. Yes, and Betty and Ruth also. We had lunch down the river, and then we came back here for the fun this afternoon.

JIM. We? Is Ward here now?

JOE. Yes, he is out on the courts playing with—oh, somebody.

JIM. Huh—funny—I saw a bunch out there as I came in, but I didn't see him. What's doing?

JOE. Ruth is giving sort of a "combination" lawn party and tennis match this afternoon for the royal party.

JIM (*blankly*). The royal party?

JOE. Sure, hard head. The attendants of the king and queen of the carnival.

JIM (*seeing light*). Oh, sure. By the way, who is to be king of the carnival this year?

JOE. Nobody knows but the committee, and they don't say anything. Of course, the one to be king knows about it by this time and I imagine the next queen is pretty definitely decided upon, too.

JIM. Why?

JOE. Because the king has the privilege of choosing his queen.

JIM. That's right. I'd forgotten. But they must both be taken from the royal party, mustn't they?

JOE. By Jove, that's right. They must be here now.

JIM (*hauling out note-book and pencil*). Who are the guests this afternoon?

JOE. Oh, let's see. Tom and his sister—— (JIM *begins to scribble in his note-book and JOE notices it.*) Here, what are you doing?

JIM. Taking notes.

JOE. What for?

JIM. For the society column in the *Post*. I'm reporting there now, when I'm not receiving or sending mail or doing other odd jobs. You see, I'm sort of confidential secretary to the Honorable Thomas Ward, Esq.

JOE. Good for you; keep up the good work and you'll own the paper yet. Doesn't Ward's father do any more editorial work?

JIM. Very little. Most of the stuff goes to Tom or to the city editor.

JOE (*laughing*). Oh, I see. And you in your position as reporter came up here to put our little festivity in the "agony column," eh?

JIM (*uneasily*). Er—no—not exactly—er—you see, I came to see your father.

JOE. So? Well, I don't know whether you can or not. There was a directors' meeting here last night (JIM *repeats business with note-book*) and it tired poor father dreadfully. At present—

CY. (*behind door at left front*). I tell you he can't be bought!

JOE (*continuing with a grin*). At—present he is taking a nap.

JIM. So it appears. Well, I'll run out and see Ward, and if your father can see me soon, let me know, will you?

JOE. All right, I will.

JIM (*as he exits right*). Thank you, I'll be on the courts.

Enter FRED HARWOOD, rear right.

HAR. Hello, Joe.

JOE. Hello, Mr. Harwood. Here for the party?

HAR. Not exactly. I'm here to see your father.

JOE (*glancing toward door*). Well—he's busy just now—but (*indicating a chair*) if you'll just be seated, I think you can see him soon, if you care to wait.

HAR. Thanks, I'll wait.

JOE. All right—er—if you'll excuse me. I want to get my tennis racket. Must do my share of the entertaining, you know.

HAR. (*as JOE exits rear left*). Sure thing—run along, don't mind me,

(After JOE is gone he looks cautiously about the room, then rises and walks about, looking suspiciously here and there. He finally stops at door left front, listens, then goes to table. He opens a drawer and begins to look through letters and papers in it.)

Enter THOMAS, rear right.

THOMAS. It isn't there, sir.

HAR. (*starting, closing drawer sharply and turning, very much relieved when he sees THOMAS*). Oh, it's you, is it? Of course it isn't there. Do you suppose a man of Cameron's intelligence would leave a dangerous article like that around?

THOMAS. I don't know, sir. But when I was in Mr. Cameron's room this morning, I saw a letter on his desk which bore the business address of Mr. Fitzpatrick.

HAR. (*excitedly*). The very one I told you to get. Did you take it?

THOMAS. A mere accident, sir. The wind blew it on the floor, and, fearing it might be lost, I placed it in my pocket, sir.

HAR. (*impatiently*). Oh, out with that high and mighty stuff, and come down to business. I offered you ten dollars if you would deliver that letter to me. Have you got it?

THOMAS. I have a letter, sir.

HAR. To whom addressed?

THOMAS. Mr. Cameron.

HAR. Typewritten?

THOMAS. No, sir, pen and ink.

HAR. Here's your money. Fitz never wrote a letter yet unless he didn't dare to dictate it. (THOMAS *takes the money and exits, left rear*. HAR. *comes to front of table, leans against table, opens letter, and reads*.) "Dear Cameron: If you elect me mayor this fall the bank gets the city business. Look out for Ward. Good luck, Fitz." Well, this puts me in right. Cameron is working for Fitz, and so am I. We both get a good shake-down if Fitz wins, but in any case Cameron would do anything to keep this from being published, so I can't lose.

(*A murmur of voices from behind door left front*. HAR. *hastily puts the letter in his pocket, and exits right rear*.)

Enter CYRUS CAMERON and JOHN CONNORS. They go to table at center.

Cy. Well, Connors, are you convinced?

CON. Yes, I'm convinced, all right. You can't get his support in any other way, but don't give him a chance to hit back, because he'll do it, and do it hard.

CY. Bah! Nothing of the sort. His paper has more influence than any other one in town, I'll grant you that, but he is so occupied with his foolish carnival business at present that he can think of nothing else.

CON. Why, what has he to do with the carnival?

CY. (*shortly*). Chairman of the decorating committee.

CON. Indeed?

CY. Yes, and what's more, I happen to know that he is to be king of the carnival.

CON. (*smiling broadly*). Oh, this is too easy.

CY. You've changed your mind rather suddenly.

CON. Sure thing. Why, if we threaten to foreclose on him he won't have the nerve to —

(CY. *lays his finger on his lips warningly. Enter JIM, rear left.*)

JIM. Oh, pardon me, I thought that you were —

CY. (*testily*). Yes, yes, I was asleep, but I'm not now. What do you want?

JIM. Mr. Cameron, I have come to ask you, in behalf of the Grand Council of the Five Nations, to decorate your bank for the carnival.

CY. Oh, you have, eh? Well, you've come on a useless errand. Why should I decorate my bank? And if I should, why isn't it of sufficient importance for your worthy chairman to handle?

CON. Yes, especially as the chairman is at present playing tennis on the courts.

Enter JOE, left rear, carrying racket.

CY. Ward here? Now? (*Sees JOE, who has come down stage.*) Joe, skip out and tell Ward I must see him at once.

[*Exit JOE, right rear.*]

CON. Well, Fredericks, how are your plans for decorating progressing?

JIM. Quite nicely. Practically every large business block in the city is being decorated. It really seems, Mr. Cameron, that your bank, being on the line of march for the carnival parade, would cause a great deal of comment if it were to remain undecorated.

CY. And if it were decorated?

JIM. Then the comment would reverse and undoubtedly prove of great advertising value.

CY. Nonsense; the bank is there for business, not for such silly pranks. (*Grows excited.*) I tell you the bank can't afford to spend money on such idiocy, and that ends it.

JIM. But, Mr. Cameron —

CY. (*evenly*). Our business is ended. *Good-day.*

(JIM starts to exit rear but meets JOE, who enters with BETTY WARD.)

JOE. Hello, people. (JIM bows to BETTY, and takes position rear centre.) Mr. Connors, allow me to present Miss Ward.

CON. (*looking in bewilderment at Cy., who returns look.* CON. swallows hard once or twice, and then awkwardly taking BETTY's hand). How—d'ye do—Miss Ward?

BETTY (*cheerily*). How—do you do, Mr. Connors?

(CON. turns and goes right very awkwardly.)

JOE. And this, Betty, is my father,—Dad—Miss Ward.

CY. How do you do?

(BETTY has advanced with hand outstretched, but CY. calmly ignores it.)

BETTY (*lamely*). How do you do, Mr. Cameron?

CY. Joe, did you see Ward?

JOE. Yes, sir. He said that he would be in as soon as he finished that set that he is playing with Ruth.

CY. (*excitedly*). What? Does that young upstart consider a game of tennis of more importance than business with me? Come along, Connors, I want to finish that talk with you. (CON. exits left front. CY. goes to door, left front, and turns.) Joe, when Ward does find it convenient to speak to me let me know, please. [*Exit.*]

JOE. Yes, sir.

(Turns to BETTY, who is at the front of the table, leaning against it, looking straight ahead. He goes to table and places his hand over one of hers. JIM, who has been watching all this unnoticed, gives a look of amused comprehension and tiptoes out, left rear.)

BETTY (*coldly, drawing her hand away*). Well!

JOE (*with a foolish grin*). Uh-huh—pretty well.

BETTY (*turning on him angrily*). Oh, indeed. You consider it well that you should insult me in this way?

JOE (*bewildered*). Insult you, how?

BETTY. Your father did not think it quite enough that I should be ignored, so he insulted me by insulting Tom.

JOE. Now, Betty, please be reasonable. Dad——

BETTY. Reasonable? Of course. I came here as a guest of your sister, and now see what you have done.

(*She drops into a chair by the table and buries her face in her hands, weeping.*)

JOE (*placing hand upon her shoulder*). But, Betty——

BETTY (*shaking her shoulders*). Go away, I hate you. (JOE *shoves hands deep in trousers pocket and with a dejected air stands facing the front*. Enter RUTH CAMERON, *wearing tennis costume and carrying tennis racket*. She looks from one to the other, then laying her racket aside she goes to BETTY and puts her arms around her neck.) Go away, I hate you.

JOE. Oh, all right. (*Turns, sees RUTH, and stops.*)

BETTY (*looking up and seeing RUTH*). Oh!

RUTH. What's the matter, dear?

BETTY (*rising nervously*). Nothing.

RUTH. Yes, there is. Joe, what have you done?

JOE (*sulkily*). I don't know any more about it than you do.

(BETTY *looks at him haughtily.*)

RUTH (*hastily*). Come, come, children, no tiffing, please. Joe, you run out on the courts. You have this set taken with Mabel Carothers, and she wants you to hurry.

JOE (*as he exits left rear*). Dad wants to see Tom as soon as he comes in.

RUTH. All right. Now, Betty, what's the trouble? Just a little lovers' quarrel, I suppose.

BETTY (*looking away*). No.—Please don't speak about it.

(*She rises and goes left, where she stands with her back to RUTH.*)

RUTH (*coming to BETTY*). Please, Betty, perhaps I can help you.

BETTY. Really, it's nothing.

RUTH. There is something wrong. Please tell me.

BETTY. Yes, I will. A few minutes ago I came in here and met your father. We were introduced, and he was positively horrid. But I didn't mind—until he called Tom names—and Joe seemed pleased about it. (*She pouts.*)

RUTH (*laughing*). You poor, abused child. You should know that Dad doesn't like Tom, even though —

BETTY. You do?

RUTH (*embarrassed, smiling*). I didn't say it.

BETTY. But you meant it.

Enter during last speech, TOM WARD, rear right. Carries racket, and wears tennis outfit.

TOM (*stopping rear*). Please may I come in?

(*The girls turn and see him. RUTH embarrassed.*)

RUTH (*awkwardly*). Why, of course—er—Dad wanted to see you.

TOM. So I have been informed.

RUTH. Shall I call him?

(*She goes to table, TOM still rear ; BETTY left.*)

TOM. No, there is no particular hurry.

BETTY (*with a meaning look at TOM*). Perhaps I could find him for you.

TOM. Perhaps. (*BETTY starts to exit, right rear. As she passes him.*) But don't exert yourself.

(*BETTY laughingly makes a mock curtsy and exits. TOM advances to table where RUTH has seated herself.*)

RUTH. How did you enjoy your vacation?

TOM. To the fullest extent, thank you.

RUTH. But that is too indefinite. Tell me about it.

TOM. Well—the weather was glorious.

RUTH. Please don't—of course it was. But what did you do?

TOM. Oh, mooned around, canoed, swam and thought.

RUTH. Thought? I'm surprised. That shouldn't be done during vacation. What did you think about?

TOM. You.

RUTH (*looking away*). Oh.

TOM. Ruth, I've wanted to tell you scores of times, but I've been afraid.

RUTH (*innocently*). You shouldn't be.

TOM (*covering her hand in his*). Then I'll tell it now.

I —

(RUTH rises.)

Enter BETTY, rear left.

BETTY (*sneezing loudly; TOM and RUTH turning, startled*). I couldn't find him.

TOM. Well, look again. (BETTY *exits, laughing*. TOM *calls after*.) And don't forget instructions.

RUTH. Instructions?

TOM. Yes—er—I told her to find him as soon as possible.

RUTH. Oh, I see, anxious to escape.

TOM. Please (*he goes to the back of her chair*), I want to tell you —

Enter HAR., rear right.

HAR. How do you do? (*They start, RUTH embarrassed*.) Is Mr. Cameron in?

TOM. Hello, Harwood. Yes, you'll find him out on the — (*Catches himself*. RUTH *glances at him smiling*.) Oh, somewhere near here.

HAR. Thank you.

[*Exit, rear left.*

RUTH. Who is that man?

TOM. He is an alderman, a member of the Grand Council, and chairman of the "King" committee.

RUTH. Oh, yes; he picks out the king and queen for the carnival, doesn't he?

TOM. Not alone. His committee picks out the king, and the king chooses his queen.

RUTH. It must be fun to be queen—if one has the right king. Who is to be the king this year?

TOM. That is a secret known only to the king and the committee.

RUTH. I see. How are your plans for the carnival progressing?

TOM. Very nicely, thank you—with one glaring exception.

RUTH. Indeed? And what is that?

TOM. Your father.

RUTH. You surprise me. I didn't know that Dad was interested in council affairs.

TOM. He is—nevertheless.

RUTH. In what way?

TOM. In the most childish way possible. (RUTH starts.) Because I am chairman of the decoration committee he has seen fit to leave the bank undecorated—merely because I have occasionally attacked his methods in the columns of the *Post*.

RUTH. What methods?

TOM. His methods of obtaining and holding control of the political situation in this city.

RUTH. But why should you attack them?

TOM (*warmly*). Because they're crooked. (RUTH rises.) Er—I beg your pardon, I forgot myself.

RUTH. Apparently. (*Coldly*.) I think your interview with my father has been too long deferred. I will tell him that you are waiting. [Exit, left rear.

TOM (*disgustedly*). In wrong again. Hope I have better luck with the old man.

Enter EDITH SCHUYLER, MABEL CAROTHERS, JOE and DICK THOMPSON, *talking and laughing. Tennis costumes, rackets, etc.; fanning themselves as though just from the courts. MABEL goes to chair near fireplace; sits; TOM at table, center; DICK takes position back of MABEL's chair; EDITH and JOE go to davenport, where they sit and talk earnestly.*

EDITH. Perhaps Mr. Ward can tell us.

TOM. At your service.

JOE. We've been quarreling as to who is king of the carnival.

TOM (*smiling*). Don't you know?

EDITH } (*doubtfully*). No.
JOE }

TOM. Then what are you quarreling about?

EDITH. But *you* ought to know.

TOM. Perhaps I do.

MABEL. Then if you do, please tell us. We are all to be members of the royal party, so I think we ought to be told.

TOM (*smiling*). If you should know, would that make a difference in your loyalty?

MABEL. No, perhaps not, but it would settle the question of who is to be queen.

TOM (*enigmatically*). Perhaps.

DICK. I think Mabel would make a royal-looking queen.

MABEL (*rising haughtily*). Do you think so, King Richard?

DICK. Not so, your Majesty. Merely Sir Dick, your humble servant. (*Bows grandly.*)

MABEL (*curtseying and going to table on which TOM has seated himself*). Wouldn't it be delightful if the king, whoever he may be, were to be of the same opinion as Dick?

(JOE and EDITH are still on the davenport talking.)

Enter RUTH, left, during MABEL'S speech. She stops rear and looks into room.

TOM (*dryly*). I'm sure any king could be proud of you.

(RUTH tosses head and exits right rear.)

MABEL. Flatterer.

DICK (*impatiently*). We have the set to finish, I believe, Miss Carothers.

MABEL. Oh, very well, Sir Impatience. (*To TOM, as she leaves him.*) Be sure that your list of royal possibilities contains my name.

TOM. It shall head the list.

MABEL. Thank you. [*Exit right rear with DICK.*]

JOE. Are we going to finish that set?

Enter JIM; stops rear.

EDITH (*rising*). Yes. I'm cool now. I am sorry, Mr. Ward, that you refuse to satisfy our curiosity.

TOM. "Refuse" is a harsh word. But let it stand. Your curiosity will soon be satisfied.

JOE. When is that?

TOM. When the carnival begins.

EDITH. } Oh!

JOE. }

(*Disappointed they talk together and exeunt rear right, exchanging conventional salutations with JIM as they pass him. JIM comes down stage.*)

JIM (*curtly*). Hello.

TOM. Hello, what's news?

JIM. To you or to me?

TOM. To both of us, of course. We know each other's business, I guess.

JIM (*advancing*). Yes—we do—not. For instance, why didn't you tell me that you are to be king of the carnival?

TOM (*startled*). Not so loud. That's supposed to be a secret.

JIM. Supposed to be, but Cy knows it just the same.

TOM. What? That's impossible.

JIM. Maybe, but that's where I got it; and another thing; I never knew before that the bank holds a fifty thousand dollar mortgage on the *Post*.

TOM. Jim, for Lord's sake, loosen up. Where have you been? How did you find this out?

JIM. Easy now, one at a time, and I'll tell you. You remember my coming out on the courts and telling you how flat his nibs turned me down?

TOM. Yes, yes.

JIM. Well, after that I took a stroll around the house. As I came near the corner of the back porch I heard your name mentioned from somewhere behind the vines, and naturally I ducked. That's where I found out things.

TOM. But how? What?

JIM. Well, for number one I found out that your mortgage fell due day before yesterday.

TOM. Yes, but I was intending to ask for an extension.

JIM. Which you won't get, unless — Ssh!

(Puts finger to lips.)

Enter Cy. and CON., left front.

CY. Well, that's settled; I'll depend on you — (*Sees TOM.*) Ah, you've decided to honor me, I see.

TOM. I came as soon as courtesy to your daughter permitted, sir.

CY. Well, it's no consequence. You're here now, so to business.

TOM (*getting worried*). Yes, sir. (*Cy., in meantime, has taken a seat at left of table, CON. at rear of table, and JIM is seated near fireplace, right. TOM stands right of table.*) But I have a bit of business I would like to dispose of first.

CY. Very well, let's hear it.

TOM. Mr. Cameron, as you know, I am the chairman of the decorating committee for the carnival, and as you desired that I should do it, I now ask you to decorate your bank for the event.

CY. (*evenly*). Yes, but why?

TOM. Civic pride and loyalty, sir; or, if you will, for the more selfish reason that it is a good advertisement.

CY. Civic pride—bosh and nonsense. (*Sarcastically.*) The Grand Council of the Five Nations,—organized to draw attention to our State fair and incidentally to boom the city. Huh, gold-bricks the people into thinking that the annual carnival is a free-will offering of the merchants of the city.

TOM. But that's what it is, isn't it?

CY. (*bitterly*). Isn't it? I should say not. A bunch of highwaymen (TOM *starts*) squeeze the money for decorations from the business men, and these, in self-defense, take it out of the people in higher prices and short weights. You won't catch me decorating; no, sir.

TOM. But it would be of value as an —

CY. (*testily and loudly*). No! The bank can't afford to spend money on such foolish and unprofitable trifles.

(JIM, *during this speech, has taken note-book and pencil, and with wicked smile and glance at Cy., scribbles in book.*)

TOM. I'm sorry, sir, that you see it in that light.

CY. Your regrets won't change my attitude, but perhaps the outcome of what I have to say to you will influence me somewhat. (*Pauses.*) Won't you sit down?

TOM. No, thank you. I think I'll take it standing, if you don't mind.

CY. Well, as you please. Er—Mr. Ward, you know my political connections, and I know that you oppose the candidate whom I—er—that is——

TOM (*quickly*). Yes, the man *you* have chosen to be the next mayor.

CY. (*smoothly*). The man whom the party has nominated.

TOM (*shortly*). Yes.

CY. Realizing the tremendous help that your paper could give the organization we wish to have its support in the present campaign. (TOM *starts to leave.*) Not, of course, without a suitable reward for its valuable services.

(JIM *whistles softly and takes notes.* HAR. *strolls in rear left and stops rear.*)

TOM. I think, Jim, we have an engagement in the office. Mr. Cameron, I must thank you for your kind suggestion and

decline with thanks. I wouldn't support Fitz for mayor for anything that you could offer.

(JIM and TOM go to rear.)

CON. Just a minute, we're not through yet. Soak it to him, Cameron.

TOM (*returning to table*). Well?

CY. Ward, there is no use mincing matters. From now on it is war to the knife. (*All group around table. Enter JOE and RUTH.*) In the first place, your presence in this house after to-day is no longer desirable.

JOE (*advancing*). But, Dad, I say —

CY. Don't worry; you keep out of this. (JOE looks around helplessly, shrugs his shoulders and goes back to RUTH, who is intensely interested. CY. continues.) And in the second place, I'll have the support of your paper in this campaign.

TOM (*easily*). If you are so sure of getting it, you might at least tell me how.

CY. With pleasure. The bank holds a mortgage on the *Post*, and that, as you know, matured day before yesterday; and I also find that your balance in the various banks is too small to meet it. Now, if you will take until to-morrow to think about this, you might be in a more willing frame of mind.

TOM (*tensely*). For what?

CY. For the support of my candidate.

TOM. And for that?

CY. I'll cancel that mortgage. Otherwise the mortgage stands, and you may expect foreclosure in a few days.

TOM (*clenching his fist, pushing his hands in his pocket and turning from table and walking to right; as he turns he sees RUTH, who turns away haughtily as he looks at her; he returns to table*). And my acceptance of your conditions would make me a welcome visitor here?

CY. (*eagerly*). Why, of course, certainly. Are you going to do it?

TOM. No! (*Tableau.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—Office of "Daily Post." Time, the next morning. Table up stage, center, littered with books and papers. Desk left and right, swinging office chair before each desk. Telephone on each desk. Two doors rear. Door down stage, right.

(As curtain rises, TOM is seated at desk right. JIM at desk left. Both busily writing and looking over a mass of papers. TOM checking papers occasionally.)

JIM (turning in chair, lighting a cigarette and looking at TOM). Say —

TOM (without looking up). What?

JIM. Going to take an inventory?

TOM (turning). For what?

JIM. For the sheriff's sale.

TOM. Sheriff's sale? What do you mean?

JIM. Well, Cameron won't be inclined to stop foreclosure after what you said about him in the morning's issue.

TOM. No, I suppose not. But there isn't going to be a change of office force here for some time, nevertheless.

JIM. But, Tom, couldn't you get a loan to cover the amount —

TOM. Now, Jim, don't worry. I've got the money, all right.

JIM. Then you must have it tied up in a sock.

TOM. Why?

JIM. Because I have 'phoned every bank in town asking if your account is good for five hundred dollars, and every one that happened to have any of your money said, "No."

TOM. Cameron did the same thing some time ago, but it's in one of those banks, nevertheless—under Burton's name.

JIM. Who—our cashier?

TOM. The same.

JIM. Well, I'll be — (Pause.) Tom, did you know that Cameron was going to fire this mine?

TOM. I suspected it.

JIM. And you transferred your account on that suspicion?

TOM. Yes, and my suspicion was justified. You remember he said he discovered that my bank balance was running low —

JIM. Yes, but how did he come to think that he knew that?

TOM. By calling up the different banks,—just as you did.

JIM. Um—that's a good system. Say, Tom, I wonder why the old boy is so sore on you?

TOM. Chiefly because I'm the only influential factor bucking him—and he knows that if he can get me, the rest of the opposition will be down like ten pins.

JIM. Therefore he's aiming at the King-pin.

TOM. Exactly, and so it's up to the King-pin to stay on the spot and avoid being bowled over; and to do that I must buck him whenever I get the chance.

JIM. Well, you took a good shot at him by printing that stuff I took yesterday. Gee,—I'll bet he'll boil when he reads that article. It's too bad you didn't print it sooner so as to avoid suspicion of being a sorehead.

TOM. A sorehead,—what do you mean?

JIM. Just what I say. You didn't make up your mind to buck him so hard until after the lady fair turned you down cold,—now don't deny it, you got sore because your romance was a little frost-bitten, eh? How about it?

TOM. Jim, cut that.—Maybe I was out for a little revenge —

JIM. Uh-huh—maybe —

Enter CON. and HAR.

CON. (*going to TOM, pushing paper into his hand, pointing out a paragraph*). Read that.

TOM (*reading*). "In an interview with Mr. Cameron yesterday afternoon it was definitely learned that the Central National Bank will not decorate its building for the carnival owing to its financial condition." (*Hands paper back.*) Anything wrong with it?

HAR. Wrong? The bank is perfectly sound. Your article is a lie.

JIM. Not quite, old scout. Connors can perhaps tell you what Cameron said at his home yesterday. How about it, Connors?

CON. (*impatiently*). Well, he didn't mean it in that way. You did a good job, though. The news spread among the

small depositors, and now there is a very healthy run in progress.

TOM }
JIM } (*startled*). What?

CON. Yes, and it's mighty lucky that to-day is Saturday. (*Looks at watch.*) It's eleven o'clock now, and if the bank can hold out until twelve it's out of danger.

TOM. And if not, Cameron is ruined?

CON. Yes, and you did it. You'll send the father of the girl you love ——

TOM. Cut it, Connors. If you came to ask me to apologize for that paragraph, you're in the wrong pew. Get out.

CON. All right, I'll go, but don't forget that you still have that mortgage to meet.

(JIM has gone to door, rear right.)

JIM. This way out, please.

(CON. exits. HAR. starts to follow.)

TOM. Just a minute, Harwood.

(HAR. turns and comes down stage.)

HAR. Well?

TOM (*rapidly*). Why did you tell Cameron that I was to be king of the carnival?

HAR. Because he wanted——er——that is—I didn't tell him.

TOM. That's what I wanted to know. Now if I hear that any one finds this out, I'll have you fired from the Council, understand?

HAR. But ——

JIM (*at door*). This way out. (HAR. looks from one to the other, claps his hat on head, exits. JIM closes door.) Well, this is a mess. Gad,—I never thought of that—a run on the bank, phew!

TOM (*disturbed*). Just the small depositors. But if they keep at it long enough the large business men will fall in line—he *must* be tided over until noon or he is gone.

Enter BETTY. JIM scratches head in perplexed manner, goes to desk, sits and scribbles, looking through pages of copy.

TOM goes to desk, and BETTY comes to him.

BETTY. Tom, why did you do it?

TOM. Do what?

BETTY. Print those lies about Mr. Cameron.

TOM. Betty, you don't understand anything about this. That article wasn't a lie.

BETTY. But Ruth —

TOM (*angrily*). Ruth believes what her father said, no doubt, but if she expects to have me retract that article, she's mightily mistaken.

BETTY. Now, Tom, don't be stubborn. Ruth has just left me and gone to the bank to see her father. They say that the bank can't hold out until twelve o'clock.

TOM (*sharply*). Who said so?

(JIM swings around in his chair ; looks at BETTY, startled.)

BETTY (*defiantly*). Joe did.

(JIM snorts disgustedly, turns to work again. JOE enters rear left unnoticed.)

TOM. So Joe had a hand in sending you here, too, eh?

(BETTY shocked.)

JOE. No, he didn't. (*They all look at him surprised.*) But he's going to take a hand right now—Tom, I always thought that you played square, and when you attacked Dad's policies in your paper I sympathized with you, and now you do this—it looks as though the bank is done for,—and we're paupers.

TOM. I'm sorry, Joe,—but as your father threatened to make me a pauper I can't see where I have any reason to feel that I have done wrong.

JOE. Wrong, why you yellow journal muckraker—(JIM rises, picks up book with calculating eye as though to throw it at JOE. TOM merely smiles ; BETTY looks shocked) you're just as crooked as the rest of them. (*To BETTY pleadingly.*) Please try to influence him to help Dad—or at least to retract that article.

BETTY (*frigidly*). The sister of a muckraker and a crook should be of little value as an intercessor.

JIM (*putting up coat collar, grinning*). B-r-r-r-r-r!

JOE (*taken aback*). And now you go back on me, I'm in the enemy's camp for fair. (*Paces back and forth distract-*

edly. TOM *turns to desk.*) I guess I'll go out and take a dose of carbolic. (*Starts rear.*)

TOM (*without turning*). Joe —

JOE (*stopping*). What?

TOM. Come here.

JOE (*coming to desk*). Well, what now?

TOM (*without looking up*). Better make that dose light or you'll burn your stomach. (JIM *laughs, turns to his work.*

JOE, *without a word, crosses stage and exits left rear, slamming door as he goes out.*) Well, Betty, another off the calling list?

BETTY (*sighing*). Yes, I suppose so.

TOM (*in a superior manner*). But never mind. You'll have him begging for sugar as soon as this mess straightens out.

BETTY (*eagerly*). Is it going to?

TOM (*smiling*). We shall soon see.

Enter EDITH, MABEL, DICK, rear left. TOM and JIM rise.
Usual salutations. BETTY sits at TOM's desk.

EDITH. Mr. Ward, is it true that Joe isn't going to be one of the royal court for the carnival?

TOM. I don't know, I'm sure; do you, Jim?

JIM. Not here.

DICK. But when we passed him coming in here he told me that he wasn't.

BETTY (*half audibly drawing her breath*). Oh!

TOM. What's up?

BETTY. He and I were — (*She stops, embarrassed.*)
Nothing! (*Rises.*) I think I'll go and find Ruth.

[*Exit, rear left.*

DICK. Whew! So they are the royal couple, eh? (TOM and JIM *exchange glances.*) Well, if this keeps up, they won't have a very enjoyable rule, will they?

JIM (*dryly*). Not very. But keep your wild imaginings to yourself, see?

DICK. Oh, surely, I won't say a word about it.

TOM. See that you don't.

(MABEL *goes to TOM, who is at table, center. EDITH crosses rear and comes down left to desk at which she sits. JIM and DICK stand, leaning on desk, talking quietly to her.*)

MABEL. Mr. Ward, are you good at short hand?

TOM (*smiling*). Try me. (*Takes out note-book and pencil.*)

MABEL. All right, take this. (*Pause.*) "The king of the coming carnival is Mr. ——" (*Pause.*)

TOM. Yes. (*Reads.*) "The king of the coming carnival is Mr. ——" (*Pause.*)

MABEL. Well?

TOM. All well so far.

MABEL. But Mr. who? Joe and Betty aren't king and queen, because they are assigned to a place in the king's retinue.

TOM (*smiling*). You insist on asking what I can't answer.

MABEL (*disappointedly*). You can answer if you wish,—I saw you and Mr. Fredericks exchange glances.

TOM. Well, even if I can, I won't.

MABEL. I'm so sorry. I want to know who is to be queen. (*Enthusiastically.*) The queen of the carnival. It must be perfectly great to rule, if only for a week. Don't you think it would be fun?

TOM (*painfully*). Great—er—Jim—perhaps our visitors would like to see the new presses.

(MABEL shows disappointment.)

EDITH. That would be splendid. Won't you show them to us, Mr. Ward?

TOM (*starting for door, rear right*). With pleasure; right this way.

(DICK and EDITH cross to rear right. TOM in doorway.)

EDITH. Are you coming, Mabel?

MABEL (*who has crossed to table*). No, thank you; I have seen them before.

TOM. Coming, Jim?

JIM. No, thanks; I've seen 'em, too.

TOM (*grinning*). Oh, all right. Be back soon.

(Exit TOM, followed by EDITH and DICK. JIM turns to desk and becomes busily absorbed in his work.)

MABEL (*absently*). Tom is a lovely man, isn't he?

JIM (*abstractedly*). Uh-huh.

MABEL. And he's very much in love, too, isn't he?

JIM. Uh-huh—what? Yes, it looks very much like rain.

MABEL. Jim Fredericks!

JIM (*starting*). Huh? (*Turns to her.*) I beg your pardon, I took you for a book agent. What were you saying?

MABEL. I said Tom is very much in love.

JIM. Oh, is that all? We can soon cure him of that. Who's the guilty party?

MABEL. Don't be silly,—he really is in love; I can tell that.

JIM. How?

MABEL. Because he won't tell me anything. I tried to find out about the king of the carnival, and he wouldn't even tell me.

JIM (*in mock horror*). My goodness gracious sakes alive, and a slap on the wrist, but what has that to do with his being in love?

MABEL. Well, if he were not in love with somebody else, wouldn't he tell me everything? Other men do—why is that?

JIM. Either they're in love with you, or they're fancy liars.

MABEL. Jim! But do you really think that he could tell me who is to be king if he were in love with me?

JIM. He might if he were an ordinary man, but he isn't; he's a politician.

MABEL. What's the difference?

JIM. A politician knows when to shut up.

MABEL. Oh! (*Pause.*) Are you an ordinary man?

JIM (*self-consciously*). Oh—ah—fairly.

MABEL (*slowly*). Then why don't you tell me who is to be king?

JIM (*crossing to her*). For the love of Mike! How did you know that I was in love with you?

MABEL (*rising, goes to back of table; JIM following. She retreats laughing*). I didn't. I just wanted to find out.

Enter TOM, EDITH and DICK.

EDITH. Thank you so much, Mr. Ward; the presses are splendid. Now you must be sure to come to the meeting of the carnival court this evening, will you?

TOM. Surely. Where is the meeting to be held?

EDITH. Ruth will entertain us. (*TOM is taken by surprise but quickly regains his composure. JIM, unobserved, grins at TOM's uneasiness.*) You must be sure and come, because it is to be the last rehearsal.

TOM (*dully*). I'll try.

EDITH. All right, that's settled. (*Rises.*) Well, I can't

sit and chatter all day. (*Goes to door, right rear, and opens it. DICK and MABEL follow, talking together.*) Be sure and come to-night. [Exit.

MABEL. And you, too, Mr. Fredericks. [Exit.

JIM (*as MABEL exits*). Thank you.

DICK (*as he exits*). So-long, I'll see you to-night.

(*Closes door.*)

TOM. }
JIM. } So-long.

TOM. Sure thing, I'll be there, *not*! (*Takes papers from desk and looks at them.*) Here, Jim, take this stuff up to the composing room. I'm going down to speak to Burton about that deposit of mine. Cameron might need it.

(*JIM takes papers.*)

JIM. But, good Lord, man, you're not going to give it to him, are you?

TOM. You forget I owe him most of it.

JIM. Sure you do, but if he can't get it to-day, he may not think of it for some time to come.

TOM. Why?

JIM (*as he exits right front*). He'll be too busy with his creditors.

TOM (*reflectively*). Very true, James. (*With sudden determination.*) So I guess it's up to me to hold off the creditors.

[Exit, hurriedly, R.

Enter THOMAS, very much disturbed, but not forgetting his dignity. Goes to desk, right. Picks up paper. Pause.

THOMAS (*reading*). "Owing to its financial condition——" Oh—my goodness! Mr. Cameron will lose his money and I will lose my job and my money, too. My entire fortune—and just as I was about to invest it in a new suit. I wish some one would come.

(*Goes back to table. Fingers over papers and books, then goes to JIM's desk and looks over papers there.*)

Enter JIM, right front.

JIM (*stopping*). Everything all right?

THOMAS (*turning, startled*). Er—yes—sir—that is, sir, no, sir, thank you, sir.

JIM (*crossing to desk*). Well, what's wrong?

THOMAS (*very ill at ease*). Er—I—about that article, sir. I'm very much worried, sir.

JIM (*at table*). Afraid you'll lose your job?

THOMAS. Not that, sir, but I have a few dollars saved and in the Central National. Is it safe to leave them there?

JIM (*grinning wickedly aside, and very impressively*). By no means. If you want to save your hard-earned pennies, withdraw your deposit at once.

THOMAS (*rolling his eyes and winking visibly*). Yes, sir, thank you. (*Starts for right rear.*)

JIM. You'll get to the bank quicker by going through the office. (*Indicates right rear.*)

THOMAS (*still vacant-eyed*). Thank you, sir. Good-day, sir. [*Exit R., rear.*]

JIM (*good-humoredly*). Good-bye, you long-drawn-out string of misery. (*Soliloquizes.*) Huh—sort of a measly trick—but Cameron turned me down hard enough to deserve all he gets.

(*Goes toward desk, left front.*)

Enter RUTH, very much agitated.

RUTH. Mr. Fredericks!

JIM (*embarrassed as he sees her*). How do you do, Miss Cameron? Er—(*indicating chair near table*) won't you sit down? (*RUTH sits down, painful silence, JIM fidgets and RUTH shows impatience. JIM bursts out idiotically.*) How well you are looking.

RUTH (*smilingly*). You have a keen eye. (*JIM, unobserved, kicks himself and appears generally disgusted with himself. RUTH, after pause, looks vacantly away from him.*) Mr. Fredericks, do you know why Tom—er—Mr. Ward inserted that paragraph in this morning's *Post*?

JIM. Self-defense.

RUTH. Why should he have to defend himself? It looks more like childish revenge.

JIM (*aside, admiringly*). Not a bad guess. (*To RUTH.*) His reasons can best be given by himself. (*TOM enters rear right; stops in doorway unnoticed.*) And I'm very sure he would much prefer to do that.

TOM. Pardon me, if I intrude (*closing door slowly and advancing to table; RUTH does not look at him and shows decided nervousness; JIM still at desk, left*), but from what I

gathered as I came in, it appears that I can be of some slight service. Am I right, Miss Cameron?

(JIM goes to rear, cautiously tiptoes across stage and down to desk, right. TOM looks at RUTH. RUTH still looks away; after pause.)

RUTH. Yes.

JIM (*insinuatingly*). Anything I can do in the composing room, Tom?

TOM. Yes, set up the Book of Job.

JIM (*astounded*). Huh? What for?

TOM. For the sporting page. (JIM looks at him in utter amazement, then tapping head with hopeless look and gesture, exits right front, slamming door as he goes. Pause. TOM stands at table facing front. RUTH seated at left of table. TOM, curtly.) Well?

RUTH (*turning in chair and extending hands appealingly on table*). Mr. Ward, Tom, please do something to help us—Dad is in his office acting like a madman, telephoning all the banks for help, and getting very little. He says the bank can't hold out until twelve o'clock.

TOM (*evenly*). You heard your father's report of my financial condition yesterday.

RUTH (*hopelessly—looking away*). Yes, I suppose it's no use, and we are paupers.

TOM (*evenly*). Exactly, and when your father gets through with me, I'll be a pauper (*leaning toward her and capturing her hands*), ready to begin all over again.

RUTH (*looking at him and trying to free her hands, TOM looking directly at her and she looking away*). Please don't, Tom, you mustn't! (*Struggles to free her hands.*) Really you mustn't! (*She turns head; looks at him.*) I—I don't want you to.

(TOM releases her hands as if stung, and straightens up.

RUTH looks disappointed.)

TOM (*coming to front of table around right with exaggerated politeness*). I am sorry to have so far forgotten myself as to cause you this inconvenience.

RUTH (*rising*). Please don't think of it in that way. (*Looks away.*) Perhaps, perhaps, it was I who forgot myself.

TOM (*taking her in his arms*). You mean——?

RUTH (*hastily freeing herself from TOM, who releases her very reluctantly; she is very agitated*). I mean nothing—I was thinking of Dad. Oh, please, can't you do something? Issue an extra and retract that statement. That would help.

TOM (*reflectively*). Not a bad idea. And if I should get out an extra?

RUTH. Oh! I would simply love you!

(TOM takes step toward her as if to embrace her, stops, reflects, and leans against table.)

TOM. No—I think the sacrifice on your part would be too great to warrant the step.

RUTH (*taken aback, then recalling the sarcasm of the remark*). Oh! you beast!

(Starts for door rear left. BETTY enters rear left.)

BETTY. Oh, here you are!

(TOM glances around, then with hopeless swing of arms goes to desk, where he sits and lights cigarette, then looks vacantly at desk, smoking meanwhile.)

RUTH (*with angry glance at TOM*). Yes, I am here, but I won't be long. (*Starts for door.*)

BETTY (*clutching RUTH's arm; RUTH stopping*). Remember you lunch with me to-day. But come up-stairs with me. I have some pictures up there, and I want you to take them home. You'll come, won't you?

Enter JIM, right front, stops at TOM's desk. BETTY opens door left rear. RUTH looks at TOM, who is oblivious of her glance.

RUTH (*ready to weep*). Yes, I'll come. [Exit.

BETTY (*leaving door open, coming down stage short distance*). Tom, I don't know what happened, but whatever it was you're a beast.

(Stamps foot and exits. JIM looks at door then at TOM, who is still absently gazing at the pigeonholes and smoking. JIM crosses to his desk.)

TOM (*swinging in his chair*). Jim.

JIM. Huh?

TOM (*solemnly*). Jim, I'm beginning to believe that.

JIM. So am I. Your bray would deceive an expert.

TOM. Oh, shut up.

(Swings back again to desk and begins to push papers and books impatiently about.)

Enter Cy., rear right, very much agitated ; stops in doorway.

CY. *(angrily)*. Ah, here you are.

(JIM, who has seated himself on desk, puts up arm as if to ward off blow, then slowly drops arm. TOM swings to front and center looking at Cy., who comes down center.)

TOM *(impatiently)*. Yes, here I am.

JIM. Here we are.

(Cy. makes gesture of impatience.)

CY. Well, can you help me out?

TOM. Your investigation of my bank account should tell you that I can't.

CY. But even a few hundreds or a thousand would help tide us over until twelve o'clock, and then the clearing house committee will investigate our books, and, finding everything all right, the other banks will advance us enough ready money to help us over the crisis ; but I must have enough to carry us over until twelve o'clock, or the bank will close its doors—bankrupt.

(Cy. drops into chair, buries face in hands. JIM lifts hands in mock blessing.)

JIM *(solemnly)*. Let us pray !

TOM. It seems strange, Mr. Cameron, that a man of your influence should want for a little financial aid. Why don't you apply to your political friends ?

CY. *(helplessly)*. I have asked them for help, and they have turned me down. I have turned everything possible into ready cash, and it still looks hopeless. Twenty or thirty thousand more would easily carry us over the crisis.

TOM *(slowly)*. And you have come to me for that amount ? Your own investigations showed me to be very near the ragged edge of ruin, and now you ask me to help you, after you have threatened to ruin me.

CY. *(angrily)*. Yes, and I'll ruin you yet. You caused

this run, and you'll suffer for it. (*Enter RUTH.*) I'll break you, Ward, and I'll set you up as a puppet to be laughed at. Next week the carnival takes place, and you'll ride through the streets in robe and crown, king of the carnival—and a pauper.

(*RUTH goes to Cy., and places her hand on his shoulder. TOM rises as he sees her. JIM stands leaning against the desk.*)

RUTH. Daddy—please, what does this mean?

(*Cy. makes one or two false starts. TOM interrupts.*)

TOM. Your father has been picturing to me the joys of my life after he finishes with me.

(*RUTH turns from him.*)

CY. Enough of this. I was a fool to come here at all. You will be served with a notice of foreclosure Monday morning, whether the bank fails or not. That's all I have to say to you. Come, Ruth.

TOM. Just a minute, please. (*Cy. and RUTH stop.*) Jim, go down and get a blank check on the First National Bank with Burton's signature. Hustle!

(*JIM exits right rear, Cy. comes back to table, RUTH goes to JIM's desk.*)

CY. Well? Every moment here is time wasted; I want and I must get a loan large enough to meet this run.

TOM. And if you don't you'll fail. You'll fall into the pit you dig for me—a pit which to your way of thinking was justified by the end you sought, but which to my way of thinking, and as I am sure it would be regarded by any honest man—it is vilely criminal.

CY. (*sneering*). Criminal! Ruth, your father is a criminal, do you hear? (*RUTH does not turn but remains seated, looking tensely straight ahead. Cy., to TOM.*) You young upstart, if you find me such a hardened criminal, why don't you have me arrested and be done with it?

TOM. You're too clever a man to invite arrest, Mr. Cameron. Remember I said "criminal," not "illegal."

CY. (*sneering*). A fine distinction, which I fail to grasp; but come, what do you want? Time flies.

Enter JIM, rear right; carries check, which he hands to TOM, who turns to desk, takes pen and fills out check.

TOM. Very true, Mr. Cameron. (*Turns to him.*) You said thirty thousand would be sufficient?

RUTH (*with angry glance at TOM*). Come, father, I believe Mr. Ward is trying to keep you here.

CY. (*turning to go*). And ruin my chances of getting a loan.

TOM (*rising*). Just a minute. (*Goes from desk to Cy.*) I regret very much that I lacked enough foresight to keep that article out of the *Post*. I also regret to deprive you of the pleasure of making a pauper out of me. (*Gives check to Cy.*) This check, on the First National, is filled out for the full amount of the mortgage which you hold, and will be honored for that amount. I would advise you to hurry. Mr. Fredericks will show you out.

(*He bows with exaggerated courtesy to CY. and RUTH, and turns and goes to desk, where he sits, and finally drops his head in his arms. CY. makes several ineffectual attempts to express his gratitude and then turns hurriedly and exits through doorway, left. RUTH goes to table, looks at TOM and moves as though to go to him, then with a sigh she turns and walks slowly off through doorway, rear left.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—*Room in CYRUS CAMERON'S home. Time, the same evening. Door down stage, left. Wide door with curtain opens diagonally into a room rear left. Through this door can be seen a davenport backed by palms, if desired. Two French windows, rear, open, hung with curtains, which are looped back, show a garden backing, and a balustrade, inside of which a few porch chairs are placed. Wide door, right, opens into room right. Medium-sized table down stage, right center, over which is hung a large electric dome. Chairs near table and about room. Moonlight shining from rear right, illuminating the porch, and shining through the windows, footlights low, light in dome, rooms at both sides brightly lighted. The girls all wear evening gowns. Men, except THOMAS, HAR. and CON., wear formal evening dress.*

(HAR. is leaning against front of table, facing front. CON. seated at table, right, smoking.)

CON. Oh—hum—there's another hope gone. We won't be able to get a cent from Cameron now, just when we need it most,—and merely because I withdrew my account to keep from losing it. But never mind—at least he's going to foreclose on Ward, and that's a big thing in itself. Humph, I wonder where he got the money to tide him over? There must be a dark horse somewhere. It looks as though we won't be able to help the organization very much this year.

HAR. But the organization needs the money. The campaign fund is low; too low to carry the election.

CON. You're right. But if we can get a few of the corporations around this town to contribute, we can get along all right; if not, we'll use the city deposit. (*Carelessly.*) Merely borrow it, you know. Cameron will fix that all right.

HAR. You bet he will, and we'll elect Fitz yet, in spite of all Ward's howling.

CON. Don't crow—you're not out of the woods yet.

HAR. I know we're not out of the woods yet,—but at least we've reached a clearing.

CON. A clearing?

HAR. Yes, and that's just the trouble. We've reached a clearing—but who is on the other side? Cameron built his own trap, and I'll bet my hide that the man who put him in it had a hand in pulling him out,—and if he did—(*throwing up his hands*) good-night, Fitz, and us.

Enter Cy., right; stops.

CY. Good-evening.

(*Advances to back of table. HAR. goes to left of table. Cy. looks from one to other.*)

CON. (*languidly*). Hello, Cameron. Pretty tight squeak, this morning?

CY. (*impersonally*). Well, rather.

HAR. Er—yes—but you were tided over all right.

CY. Yes.

CON. What's the matter, Cameron? Sick?

CY. No—but I'm wondering why *you* are here.

CON. (*smiling*). That's easy. We came to see about that foreclosure. You want to foreclose Monday morning so as to be sure and have everybody know it Monday night.

CY. Why so soon?

CON. So that when he is crowned king of the carnival Monday night he'll enjoy it more.

Enter TOM, right; stops in doorway unnoticed.

CY. (*bringing hand down angrily on table*). Enough of this. I've finished with you two for good. This morning when I was in trouble, you both deserted, and now when it is all over, you are back, ready for more crookedness. Well, from now on I'm the wrong party to apply to, that's all. (CON. *has risen. Cy. turns, walks toward rear and turns again.*) But you might be interested to know that the mortgage on the *Post* is paid—in full.

CON. }
HAR. } (*astonished*). What?

TOM. Yes, paid in full, this morning. (*They look at him surprised as he advances to table.*) Connors, and I think I may include your very able assistant, you played your game a little too fast. You thought that by pitting the apparent poverty of the *Post* against the wealth and cleverness of your party leader, you could gain your ends with the least possible

danger to yourselves. From what I have heard it is apparent that you played both ends against the middle—but—unfortunately for you, the middle dropped out—and, gentlemen, you lose! (HAR. *smiles easily*; CON. *sneers*.) Mr. Cameron, have you anything more to say to those men?

CY. Nothing.

TOM (*meaningly*). Neither have I.

CON. (*looking from one to other; going to door, right*). Humph! another candidate for the reformers' club. I guess we're in the wrong church. [Exit CON.]

HAR. (*going to CY.; TOM looking out after CON.*). Maybe you haven't anything more to say to me, but I have a whole lot to say to you, and you can bet your life I'm going to say it. There's going to be a storm soon, so you had better furl sails and batten down your hatches. Good-evening.

(*Bows politely; passes TOM with superior smile. CY. embarrassed.*)

Enter THOMAS, right; stops in door.

THOMAS. Telephone for you, sir.

CY. (*relieved*). Thank you—er—excuse me, I—will you, Ward? I'll be right back. (TOM *nods as he lights cigarette. CY. goes to door, right.*) And, Thomas, you might tell Ruth that Mr. Ward is here. [Exit.]

THOMAS. Yes, sir. (*Starts across stage toward left.*)

TOM (*without looking up*). Thomas!

THOMAS. Yes, sir.

TOM. Don't do it.

THOMAS. But Mr. Cameron said —

TOM (*calmly*). Thomas, if you carry that message to Miss Cameron, I'll wring your neck.

THOMAS. Yes, sir.

TOM. You mean, no, sir.

THOMAS. Yes, sir; no, sir.

TOM (*helplessly*). Thomas, please leave.

THOMAS. Yes, sir. [Exit, right, haughtily.]

Enter JIM, left rear. Has napkin tucked in vest.

JIM (*surprised*). Hello, welcome home.

TOM. Thanks.

JIM (*advancing and perching on table, facing front*). Gimme

a smoke. Thanks. (*Lights it.*) What are *you* doing here? I thought you said you wouldn't come.

TOM. I changed my mind. Cameron called me up this evening and said that he had something very important to say to me, so here I am. (*Smiles.*) Where'd you get the chest protector?

JIM (*noticing napkin*). Oh, Lord! (*Removes it and looks for place to put it. Finally puts it in table drawer.*) That's what I get for leaving the table in a hurry. But I couldn't stand it any longer. That fool Joe drove me out.

TOM. How?

JIM. Making love to Betty. The poor chap can't see any one, and Betty won't look at him—and oh, yes—Ruth is looking a little down in the mouth.

TOM (*with some restraint*). Yes?

JIM (*looking at him pityingly, then mimicking him*). Yes? (*Seriously.*) Yes, Tom—I hate to play Dutch uncle, but why don't you ask her to be queen, and have it over—the committee's satisfied, and you *must* choose some one before Monday.

TOM (*calculatingly*). I haven't much time left, have I?

JIM (*looking at him disgustedly, then getting down from table and starting left rear*). What's the use?

Enter JOE, MABEL, EDITH, DICK, RUTH and BETTY, laughing and talking.

MABEL (*advancing to front, cordially extending hand to TOM; rest, including JIM, forming group rear*). Good-evening, Mr. Ward.

TOM (*rising*). Good-evening, Miss Carothers.

MABEL (*coming closer, very confidentially*). Perhaps I should have said "your highness."

TOM (*startled*). Who told you?

MABEL (*clapping her hands delightedly*). Then I was right. (*TOM vexed. MABEL continues coquettishly.*) And you said that my name was to head the list.

TOM (*puzzled*). The list? Of what?

MABEL. Of royal possibilities.

TOM. Oh, yes, and as I remember it, I emphasized "possibilities."

MABEL (*disappointedly and haughtily*). Oh, my mistake—I beg your pardon.

(*She goes rear to JIM, talks with him a moment, and they go*

through window to porch, where they sit talking. As she leaves him TOM looks after her with a smile, then sighs and starts for door right. JOE sees him, heads him off at door. EDITH, RUTH, BETTY and DICK are in group rear, talking together.)

JOE (*taking TOM by arm*). What's your hurry?

(Draws him back to table.)

TOM. I didn't want to wear out my welcome. *(Pause.)* I'll stand without hitching.

JOE *(sheepishly withdrawing hands)*. Say—Tom—you like me pretty well, don't you?

TOM. My dear boy, after your very able speech in my office this morning my love for you has become a consuming passion.

JOE. Aw, quit it. I'm sorry about this morning, but I don't want to be jollied now. I mean it; do you?

TOM. Um—well, if Betty is willing, I guess I can stand it all right. *(Turns—calls.)* Betty, Betty——

JOE *(grasping him by arm)*. But I haven't——

BETTY. Yes?

(Leaves group, comes down stage. DICK and EDITH say a few words to RUTH, and go through window to porch, where they walk back and forth engrossed in each other.

BETTY comes to back of table, TOM right, JOE left. BETTY looks at TOM questioningly. RUTH is at window looking out.)

TOM. This young man, after very beautifully denouncing me this morning, is now very anxious to find out what I think of him. Shall I tell him?

(JOE is very much embarrassed.)

BETTY *(surprised, then wickedly)*. I should hate to hear you swear, Tom.

JOE. Aw, quit it. *(With determination.)* Betty—I asked Tom's opinion of me so I might possibly find out how you felt about it. I haven't found out, so I'm going to tell my side of the story.

BETTY. Will it take long?

JOE. No, very short—I love you, Betty, I love you dearly——

(TOM turns, goes to door right. BETTY turns haughtily

and goes rear left toward door. JOE, speechless, watches her.)

BETTY (*very coldly*). If Mr. Cameron wishes to enlarge upon this subject (*changing her haughty attitude laughingly, and throwing JOE a kiss*), he will find me in the garden.

(*She exits rapidly, followed quickly and eagerly by JOE. TOM still rear left.*)

RUTH (*turning and coming down stage*). Mr. Ward ——— (*TOM turns and faces her without a word.*) I am very sorry that you could not dine with us this evening. (*Goes to table.*)

TOM. Undoubtedly. But after being ordered from the house by your father, and also being very emphatically snubbed by you, I tried to save you a greater sorrow by not coming. Anyhow, I was busy.

RUTH. Quite evidently you have not lost your talent for saying the wrong thing. If all that you say is true, why are you here now?

TOM. At your father's request. (*Suddenly changes tone.*) But I was glad of the opportunity to come, for I did want to see you and speak to you.

RUTH. You seem to have availed yourself of that opportunity.

TOM. But not as I meant to.

RUTH. It was your privilege to do as you pleased.

TOM. Yes, but when I saw you, and remembered this morning, I said what I did not mean.

RUTH. Do you often do that?

TOM. Please, Ruth, that's unfair. I want to tell you how sorry I am for my rudeness at the office this morning—I was, as you said, a beast.

RUTH. No—the rudeness, if you wish to call it that, was greatly counterbalanced by your generosity.

TOM. A generosity made possible by my previous idiocy.

RUTH. But it was generous of you—Dad said so. Why—even Mr. Connors withdrew his account.

TOM. He did? But he came to my office and tried to get me to retract that article. (*Thoughtfully.*) Perhaps he didn't feel as anxious to risk his money as he did to put me out of the race.

RUTH. Well, he didn't succeed, and—(*extending her hand*) I'm awfully glad.

(*TOM takes her hand as CY. enters right.*)

CY. A-hem, ah—do I intrude?

(*TOM looks at RUTH, who meets his glance and then turns away. TOM releases her hand with a discouraged sigh.*)

TOM. No, not at all.

CY. (*coming to table and smiling affably*). Well, everything is looking bright for the carnival, isn't it?

TOM. Yes—thanks to your kind assistance.

CY. Mr. Ward—you're not going to let the memory of my folly—for I admit that it was folly—stand between us now, I hope?

TOM (*slowly*). Um—no. But I may allow it to be a guide in my relations with you in the future.

RUTH. Now, gentlemen—do you want to start quarreling all over again? Please don't. And now it's time for the dancing to begin. We should be pleased to have you stay, Mr. Ward.

CY. Yes, to be sure. You must stay and dance. Forget your troubles and worries, and enjoy yourself. You work too hard.

TOM (*deprecatingly*). Not at all. (*To RUTH.*) Yes, I shall be delighted to stay. But I thought that the carnival court was to do its final rehearsing to-night?

RUTH. It was—and it has—earlier in the evening. There was nothing to do but a lot of final instructions. Then you will stay?

TOM. Yes, thank you.

RUTH. I'm so glad. (*She goes to window rear left and calls.*) Come, people.

(*MABEL and JIM rise, come through window and exeunt with RUTH rear left. DICK and EDITH cross porch from right and exeunt left rear; RUTH exits left rear.*)

CY. (*after a pause*). Well, this has been a sorry mess, hasn't it?

TOM. Well—it depends on the point of view. I'm not kicking.

CY. Of course not. Neither am I. I was lucky to get out of it as easily as I did.

TOM. Yes, I suppose so. There is no question as to the bank's soundness now.

CY. No—and I have you to thank for it.

TOM. But for me there would have never been a question.

CY. Perhaps not. But at the same time if you hadn't paid that thirty thousand, there would have been a different story to tell. I would be a ruined man.

TOM. I should hardly say that. You could surely have prevailed on some of your political friends to help you out.

CY. (*bitterly*). I tried it. Do you suppose that, under the circumstances, I should have appealed to you until I had tried every other method?

TOM. No—it doesn't seem logical, especially in view of the fact that you considered me a pauper—or at least intended to make a pauper of me as the easiest way to realize your ambition.

CY. (*deprecatingly*). But you misunderstand.

TOM. No—I don't think I do. Very naturally you want Fitz elected. That will mean that your bank continues to be a repository for the city funds and a well paid go-between in a great many of the city's financial transactions. It isn't fair, Mr. Cameron. Give the other banks a chance to bid for the prize, and then, if you underbid them, you should have the deposit and not otherwise.

CY. Ward—you have hit the nail on the head. That is one reason for my support of Fitz. Another was my antagonism to you, but that is over—this morning settled that.

TOM. But, Mr. Cameron, as I said before—that was my fault entirely. But I will say this in my defense: I did not think that it would be taken as seriously as it was. I merely did it in a spirit of revenge; a childish desire to anger you and show you that I was not afraid.

CY. Well—it's all over, and I am willing to let the past be forgotten, except in the light of a profitable experience.

TOM. I think the profit is mutual.

CY. With mine much the greater, for I have saved my business, minus, perhaps, the city deposit, about which you seem so deeply concerned.

TOM. Don't you expect to get it next year?

CY. (*shrugging his shoulders*). Not unless we bid higher for it than we did last year.

TOM. But if Fitz wins the fight and becomes mayor, he ought to swing the city business to you.

CY. He ought to, and perhaps he'll try. But the bank will bid with the others, and take what it deserves.

TOM. Fine! Won't Fitz be pleased?

CY. No, he won't, but I've finished with him and his crowd for good. They all wanted to see you put under, and were willing to have me do the job, but just as soon as I got into trouble they quit me. Every single man jack of them either withdrew his deposit or refused to give me any help.

TOM. So I suppose you will discontinue your campaign for Fitz?

CY. (*after a pause*). Ward, I like you and, notwithstanding to-day's trouble, I like your methods,—and to show it I have ordered the bank to be decorated for Monday night.

TOM. Thank you.

CY. But I can't go back on my promise. I promised the organization that I would help them, and I will. As I said yesterday, "From now on, it's war to the knife," but the war will be carried on in the open and, as far as I can help it, will be played fair. (*Extends hand across table.*)

TOM (*looking at CY., taking hand*). Yes, sir, I believe it will, and I'm glad.

Enter BETTY and JOE, rear left. They come down stage, center, arm in arm.

JOE. Hello, Dad. Hello, Tom. Aren't you sort of previous about shaking hands? Gee, news does travel to beat four of a kind.

(*He glances at BETTY and grins happily. BETTY smiles and looks away embarrassed.*)

CY. What? You don't mean —

JOE. Just that.

CY. Well, I'll be — (*Looks at BETTY, who is still looking away.*) And—but who —

TOM (*hastily*). Allow me to present my sister, Mr. Cameron.

BETTY (*turning*). I believe Mr. Cameron can well dispense with this introduction.

(*CY. astonished.*)

JOE (*delightedly*). All down,—set them up on the other alley.

CY. Er—er—er—but—Miss Ward, I was busy yesterday morning, and undoubtedly I was rude. But I am sorry, and I am glad to see you with us to-night (*slyly*), especially under the circumstances.

BETTY (*extending her hand, which CY. takes*). And I am glad to be here (*with a glance at JOE*), even under the circumstances.

JOE (*getting behind CY., taking him by the shoulders and marching him to door, left rear*). Now, out you go. They want you out there. (*CY. exits, laughing. JOE comes down stage to BETTY.*) How about a little dancing, Betty?

BETTY. Just the thing. (*She takes JOE's arm and they turn to go out rear left. As she turns she sees TOM, who has gone to window rear and stands looking out.*) Oh, I forgot. Tom, why don't you come in and dance?

TOM (*turning*). I'll be in soon. Run along, now, kids, and enjoy yourselves.

BETTY. All right, don't be long.

[*Exits with JOE, rear left.*]

JOE. I'll save you a dance.

TOM. Thanks.

(*Exits slowly through window to porch and off right rear.*)

Enter MABEL and JIM, left rear.

JIM. Let's stop here. It's nice and cozy—and lonesome.

MABEL. Lonesome?

JIM. Oh, no. Of course not, with you here.

MABEL. Rather pretty, but quite unnecessary.

JIM. Then you know I'm not lonesome when you're around.

MABEL (*haughtily*). I know nothing of the sort.

JIM. Bump!

MABEL. Did you speak?

JIM. Yes,—I said, "I'm a chump."

MABEL (*very haughtily*). Oh, indeed.

JIM. Yes, I am—no, I'm not. Help! What am I?

MABEL. Jim, what are you talking about?

JIM. You—nothing—I dunno. (*He goes to center and puts his finger to his forehead as if in thought. MABEL watches him in amazement.*) I'll do it, I'll do it—done. (*Goes to MABEL and leads her to window, rear; stops and turns.*) Do you see that lamp on the table?

MABEL (*in bewilderment*). Yes.

JIM (*pointing*). Do you see that moon?

MABEL. Of course.

JIM. Well, that lamp is to the moon a little blot of nothing surrounded by glass. I resemble the lamp when I am with

you, trying to parade my feeble rays in the light of your celestial radiance.

MABEL (*enthusiastically*). Oh, Jim, how pretty.

JIM. Yes, I thought it pretty good myself when I read it.

MABEL. You're a horrid thing.

JIM. Oh, if that's the way you feel about it —

(*Starts to swagger out, right.*)

MABEL. Jim! (JIM *stops, turns.*) You're not so—so—very horrid.

JIM (*crossing to her, but she keeps out of his reach*). How horrid?

MABEL (*forming a zero with her hand*). Oh—just about so horrid.

JIM (*trying to catch her, but she eludes him; they stop; JIM, center stage; MABEL, rear, at window*). Aw, Mabel, you can't tell a fellow a thing like that so far away.

MABEL. Yes, I can—(*smiling*) unless he's an awfully good runner. [*Exit through window and off stage, right.*]

JIM. That's me. (*Follows her.*)

Enter HAR. and THOMAS, right front.

THOMAS. But Mr. Cameron is busy. Can't you wait?

HAR. No, I want to see him now, and (*looking about the room*) I think that this is about as good a place as any. Tell him I want to see him here.

THOMAS. But —

HAR. No "buts." You know, in the course of the conversation I might accidentally tell him how I got that letter. Now, will you go?

THOMAS (*frightened*). Oh—yes, sir; immediately, sir.

[*Exit, rear left.*]

HAR. (*rubbing his hands*). We lose—but I'll win,—and Cameron won't be quite as big a boss as he was before. I'll get a little money from him now,—and then keep the letter so that I can pull the strings. What he says goes; but from now on I'll tell him what to say.

Enter CY., rear left; stands in door.

CY. (*coldly*). You wished to speak with me?

HAR. Yes, I have a little matter in connection with this Fitz affair, which I would like to straighten out.

CY. (*advancing*). I thought that I had made myself very clear on that point. Whatever my position in regard to the coming election, it is one which does not require any assistance from you.

HAR. I didn't come to offer assistance, I came to get yours.

Enter RUTH, rear left; stops in door.

CY. (*at table*). What? You dare to say that to me after what has happened?

RUTH (*crossing to Cy., putting her arms around his neck*). Daddy, dear, what's the matter? More politics? I thought that I could have you at least for one evening.

CY. And so you shall, dear. I think, Harwood, that you won't have any trouble in finding your way out.

HAR. No, I'm sure of that, but (*insinuatingly*) before I go I'd like to talk to you about a letter which you received from Mr. Fitzpatrick a few days ago.

CY. (*starting, then dazedly to RUTH*). Yes, dear,—I'll be with you in a minute. Run along now.

RUTH (*as she exits rear left*). Don't be long, daddy.

CY. (*tensely*). Now, Harwood, what is it?

HAR. (*easily*). Just this, I have a letter—no matter how I got it, and I think that you know what it is. How do you think it would look in print, eh?

Enter TOM, rear right, slowly, head bent as if in thought. Starts down stage through window, but stops when he hears Cy.'s voice.

CY. Harwood, you wouldn't dare.

(*TOM hides behind curtains.*)

HAR. I wouldn't, eh? Try me.

CY. (*tensely*). What do you want?

HAR. Oh—nothing impossible—just a small matter of five hundred dollars—to defray current expenses—and the possession of the letter as a safeguard.

CY. (*pacing back and forth*). But this is blackmail; low, scoundrelly blackmail.

HAR. If it's any worse than robbing the citizens of this town by using city money for your own benefit, I'd like to

know it. But that has nothing to do with the case. You have heard my terms ; do you accept ?

CY. (*at left, seated ; facing front ; dully*). No !

HAR. (*at table pulling letter from his pocket, and holding it up*). Oh, I have it, all right. Once again, do you accept ?

CY. (*as before*). No ! It's blackmail !

(HAR. *angrily throws letter on table and crosses to CY.*

TOM *slips from behind curtain and, keeping his eye on*

HAR., *goes quietly to table, where he picks up letter.*)

HAR. (*to CY.*). You fool—you know you'll give in. You must. You are merely playing against time in the hope that your ready wit will pull you through. There's many a slip—sometimes. But I'm taking no chances. I have you in a vise, Cameron, and the harder you struggle the harder I'll squeeze. Do you agree to my terms ?

(*Tom is still unnoticed.*)

CY. (*rising unsteadily*). I—I suppose—I——

TOM (*evenly*). Before saying anything rash, Mr. Cameron, allow me to agree with the gentleman, that there's many a slip. (*They turn, astonished.*) You made the slip, Harwood. (*Crosses to CY.*) Here is your letter, Mr. Cameron. (*CY. grasps it feverishly, and HAR. moves as if to grasp it. TOM intercepts him.*) No, Harwood, you've played your game and lost again,—so—(*evenly*) be a good loser.

(*He indicates door, right.*)

HAR. (*sneering*). Oh, I'm a good loser, don't worry. Good-evening.

(*He bows low, and swaggers slowly off right.*)

CY. (*going to TOM, taking his hand*). Thank you, Tom. I can't say any more, I'm too grateful.

(*He shakes TOM's hand fervently, turns and hurries off right, greatly agitated.*)

TOM (*sighing, going to table, sitting, sighing*). Oh, hell ! Mr. Fixit—that's me.

(*Buries his head in his hands with a sigh.*)

Enter RUTH hurriedly through door down stage left. She starts across stage.

RUTH (*seeing TOM and stopping*). Oh, I—I—thought you had gone.

TOM. Were you hurrying to verify your surmise?

RUTH. Perhaps. (*She goes to front of table.*)

TOM (*at back of table, both facing front*). Perhaps what?

RUTH. Perhaps—er—yes.

TOM. Or perhaps no?

RUTH. Perhaps.

TOM (*looking dazed, then collecting himself*). Well, then, if that is the case, *perhaps* I may encroach on your time long enough to deliver a message from a very particular friend of mine.

RUTH. Oh—what is it?

TOM. Er—he is—he—that is—he is to be king of the carnival, and—er—he wants you to be queen.

RUTH (*smiling wickedly*). Do you want me to say yes?

TOM. Of course, er—yes, surely.

RUTH. But supposing some one else wants to be queen?

TOM. What's the difference? He wants you.

RUTH. But I think I should know who the man is. You want me to accept without knowing anything about him.

TOM. Well, I can't vouch for his looks, but he is honest, and a gentleman.

RUTH. Oo-oh, but aren't you fond of yourself!

TOM (*coming around table to front*). When did you find out?

RUTH (*turning from him*). In your office this morning.

TOM. Then you will be queen?

RUTH (*coldly*). Why don't you ask Mabel? She is just dying to have you.

TOM (*coming close to RUTH, who is still turned from him*). And if I should? (*RUTH bites her lips and looks down, nervously toying with articles on the table. TOM, insistently.*) And if I should?

RUTH (*shyly as she turns slowly toward him*). I shouldn't like it a bit!

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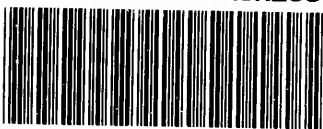
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